Loan assistance, was also availed from the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan (now known as the Japan Bank for International Cooperation) for the development of Ajanta-Ellora (Phase-I) to the tune of 3745 million Japanese Yen. In addition to these completed projects loan has also been approved for the development of Ajanta Ellora Phase-II for an amount of 7331 million Japanese Yen and this project is presently under implementation.

Long term strategies to promote tourism

4310. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is the fifth tourist destination in the world;

(b) if so, what is India's position during the last three years; and

(c) what long-term strategies are proposed to be evolved to promote tourism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) The leading travel magazine "Conde Nast Traveller" in its Readers Awards has selected India as one of the top 6 favourite destinations of the world for discerning travellers. The "Lonely Planet", in its survey conducted in 134 countries, selected India amongst the top 5 favourite international destinations.

(b) Rank of India in terms of world tourist arrivals has varied between 50—53 during 2000 to 2002. Information for the subsequent years has yet to be received from the World Tourism Organization.

(c) A number of long term measures have been taken to promote tourism, including:

- Positioning and maintaining tourism development as a National priority activity;
- Enhancing and maintaining the competitiveness of India as a tourism destination;
- Improving India's existing tourism products and expanding these to meet new market requirements;
- Creation of world class infrastructure;
- Special thrust to rural and small segment tourism;

- Attention to civilizational issues and issues pertaining to civic administration, good governance and also of social and cultural values; and
- Development of integrated tourism circuits.

Plan to boost tourism industry

4311. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any plan in collaboration with ASI to boost up tourism industry in the country especially in Delhi by developing new tourist sites and by maintaining the existing sites; and

(b) whether Government are planning to start helplines and multilingual websites to provide information on Indian tourist sites?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Ministry of Tourism extends assistance for development of destinations including sites of ASI on a continuous basis, which includes sites of Delhi also.

(b) The Ministry of Tourism has a multilingual website www.incredibleindia.org which provides information on various Indian tourist sites/destinations.

Round table conference of Tourism Ministers of BIMSTEC countries

4312. SHRIMATI KAMLA MANHAR: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a round table conference of Tourism Minister of BIMSTEC countries *i.e.* India, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangaladesh and Bhutan had been organized in India wherein it was agreed upon to establish an information centre in India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM SHRIMATI **RENUKA CHOWDHURY**): (a) **Yes**, Sir.

(b) It had been agreed in this conference **to** establish Tourism Information Centre in India for producing and updating all publicity **and** collateral materials including Brochures and CDs through inputs from focal points of each BIMSTEC member country.